

# THE CAMBRIDGE STATISTICS DISCUSSION GROUP

**Wednesday 2nd March 2005 7:15 for 7:45**

The Statistical Laboratory,  
Centre for Mathematical Sciences,  
Wilberforce Road, Cambridge

## Dead Dutch Cats

**Mary Garratt**

**Abstract:**

In April 1996 veterinary surgeons in the Netherlands observed an unusually large number of cats with acute paralysis of the hind legs, often rapidly followed by paralysis of the fore legs and subsequent respiratory failure. Postmortem examination revealed the cause to be acute polyneuropathy. Polyneuropathies can arise from a number of conditions, including diseases, dietary deficiencies and poisoning. A team of veterinarians set up to investigate the outbreak found that a high proportion of the affected animals had been fed one of two brands of food before the illness. This talk will describe the role of a statistician in the subsequent identification of the cause of the epidemic.

**Speaker:** Mary spent most of her working life as a statistician at Dalgety's central research facility in Cambridge. Before its demise in 1998, Dalgety was a major food manufacturing company with brand names such as Spillers, Homepride, Winalot and Felix. Its pet food business manufactured the two foods implicated above.

**Directions:** The main entrance is reached from Clarkson Road by going along the footpath to the right of the Newton Institute, and turning left through the gatehouse towards the main building (Pavilion A), which has a glass front and a curved grassed roof. The main entrance is in the middle of the glass front. Coffee before the talk will be in the common room in Pavilion D, and the talk will be in Meeting Room 5 in Pavilion A.. Free Parking is available after 5pm on Clarkson and Wilberforce Roads.

**Provisional Next Meetings:**

11th April – Anthony Edwards (Gonville and Caius) on ‘Cambridge Statistics from Venn to Fisher and Beyond’.  
19th May - Adam Kleczkowski (Plant Sciences).

**Supper:** Some members eat before a talk at the University Centre meeting in the downstairs bar at 6pm. All welcome !

**Subscriptions:** of 4 pounds per member are now due for the 2004-2005 session.

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